

Drugs

Letters to the Editor

The CIA Responds

SIR: As you are aware, the Central Intelligence Agency seldom responds to criticism of any sort. It cannot remain silent, however, when a newspaper with The Star's reputation prints an article alleging that this agency supports the heroin traffic in Southeast Asia. I refer to the column by Judith Randal in The Star of 29 June.

So serious a charge should be made only on the basis of the most convincing evidence. Miss Randal states only that "reporters have been hearing for more than a year" and then refers to an article in Harper's magazine by a graduate student, Alfred W. McCoy.

Charges of this nature have been made previously and each time have been most carefully investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. The public record on this subject is clear. There is, for instance, a report by Roland Paul, investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in the April 1971 issue of Foreign Affairs, which states: "... due to the long association with the CIA, the Meo tribesmen in Laos were shifting from opium to rice and other crops."

The Congressional Record of June 2, 1971, printed a letter from John E. Ingersoll, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, to Representative Charles S. Gubser of California, which states: "Actually, CIA has for some time been this bureau's strongest partner in identifying foreign sources and routes of illegal trade in narcotics. Their help has included both direct support in intelligence collection, as well as in intelligence analysis and production. Liaison between our two agencies is close and constant in matters of mutual interest. Much of the progress we are now making in identifying overseas narcotics traffic can, in fact, be attributed to CIA cooperation."

Miss Randal's article is also in contrast to the two articles by your staff writer, Miriam Ottenberg, on June 18 and 19, 1972, in which she pointed out: "U.S. narcotics agents are making a sizable dent in the Southeast Asian dope traffic and—despite reports to the contrary — America's Asian allies and the CIA are helping them do it." And she quoted John Warner of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs as saying, "he had seen nothing of an evidentiary nature from Mr. McCoy 'other than gossip, conjecture and old history'."

Narcotics addiction is one of this country's most serious social problems. The Central Intelligence Agency is dedicated to eradicating this menace and, specifically, to interdicting the flow of narcotics entering this country.

It is difficult to understand why a writer would publish material tending to undermine confidence in this effort without the most convincing proof. More than one year ago, in an address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Richard Helms, director of Central Intelligence, stated: "There is the arrant nonsense, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency is somehow involved in the world drug traffic. We are not. As fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as are all of you. As an agency, in fact, we are heavily engaged in tracing the foreign roots of the drug traffic for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. We hope we are helping with a solution; we know we are not contributing to the problem."

This statement remains valid today.

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